Historical Society of Palm Desert

P.O. Box 77
Palm Desert, CA 92261
(760) 346-6588

The Hourglass

Community
Service
Collections
Archives

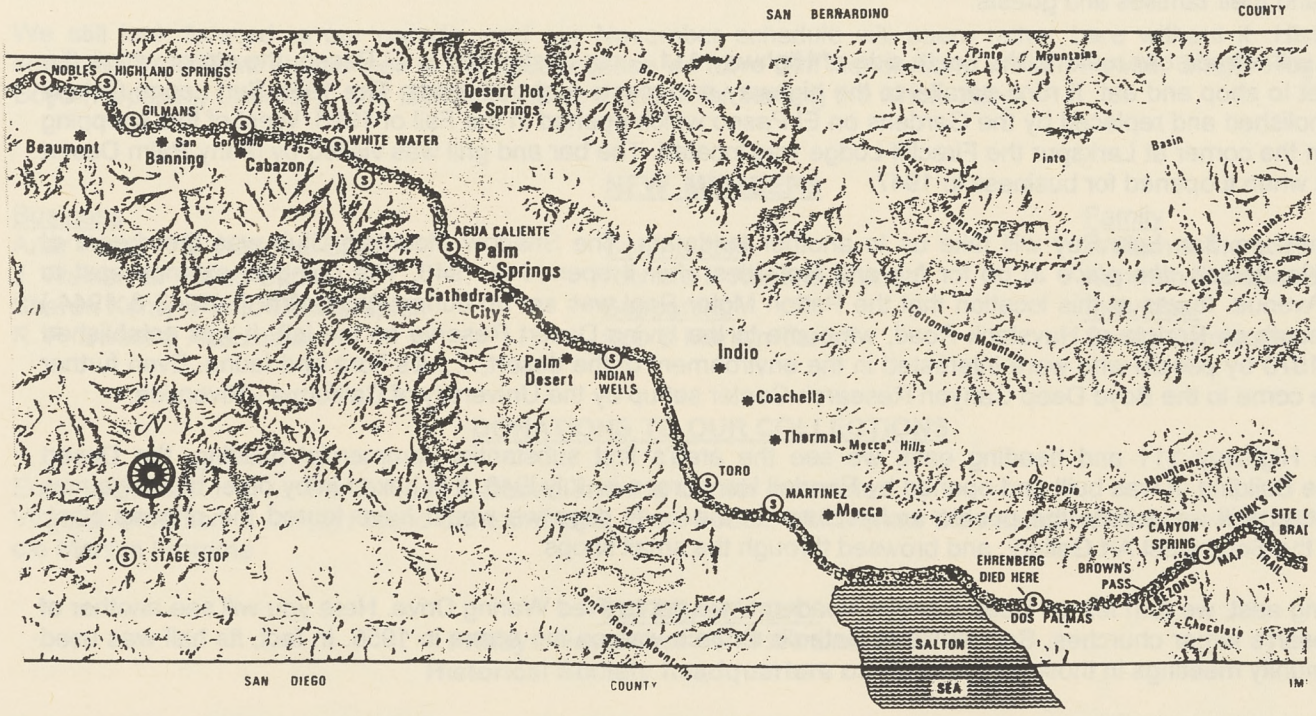
FALL 2005 **VOL. 12, NO. 3**

HIGHWAY 111

The History ---- The Exhibit

By Dick Folkers - Vice, President **** Ginny Folkers - Curator
Phil Joy & Benjamin Egan - City of Palm Desert

Let's take a trip along the main artery in Palm Desert. Along the way we will travel through time warps and visit significant historical developments. Of course, our mode of transportation will vary. If we are Cahuilla Indians making our way to the seasonal village of Kavinish "Kavanic" at Indian Wells, we would be on foot or maybe horseback. The sandy trail would hug the foothills closely. Horse and wagon travelers would have rough rides. Maybe we were with the Romero Expedition in 1823. Now we hear that gold has been discovered at the Colorado River, and we need a way to get from Los Angeles to La Paz, Arizona. Its 1862 and a man named Bradshaw refines the ancient dirt trail and puts in a couple of old-time convenience stores. Years pass, the automobile is introduced, so we crank up old Lizzy and bounce along on our narrow tires. Today we push the button to raise the garage door, put the air-conditioning on full blast, and stop at the first gas station to pay $3.00 a gallon.



Our tour will start at the west end of the portion we will emphasize. It is 1941 and we are seeing a landing strip on the east side of Rio del Sol (now Bob Hope Drive). Hank Gogerty bought some property and six years later he had established the nucleus of what became the Palm Desert Air Park and Desert Air Hotel. Eventually, Marriott's Rancho Las Palmas Resort was built on the property. As we travel through to 1971, we will see the Eisenhower Medical Center which was built by Peter Kiewit. This complex also occupies the Gogerty property.

Highway 111 (continued)

As we come to Painter's Path we can see that the curves don't make for the safest motoring, so in 1963 Cal Trans straightened out Hwy. 111 from there to Town Center Way. Want to stop for a little shopping spree? We have arrived at Palm Desert Town Center. It is now l983 and the May Company is having it grand opening celebration. In the present, it has expanded with a two-story parking garage, and a new name "Westfield Shoppingtown".

Good thing we aren't traveling during the years of the floods. One measure of control was the Palm Valley Channel, which was realigned in 1979 and lined shortly afterward. Now we come to the famous Pines to Palms Highway up into the mountains. Today we call it Highway 74, and in l963 Cal Trans aligned it with the future Monterey Avenue north of Highway 111. As we travel south up the hill we see on our right the Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church which originated in 1948 and is now located here. Right next to it is St. Margaret's Episcopal Church which opened its door in February 1966. Still heading south we see the Santa Rosa Mountains National Scenic Area Visitor Center. It was opened by the Bureau of Land Management in the Fall of 1995.

Let's go back down the hill. In bygone years we would be able to see date orchards and grape vineyards growing on the north side of Highway 111. In 1958 the College of the Desert opened at Monterey Avenue and Fred Waring Drive (formerly Avenue 44.) Though some of the date trees have been preserved, with all the residential and commercial development, the place sure looks different. California State University-San Bernardino started classes on the C.O.D. campus in 1993.On the corner of the college property the Bob Hope Cultural Center / McCallum Theatre was built and opened to the public on November 28, 1987.

As we travel east along the commercial corridor, we see that there are frontage roads to accommodate parking for the businesses along Highway 111. The City of Palm Desert started modification on the frontage roads in 1981. Now we'll turn left on San Pablo. You simply *must* see the Civic Center and the adjoining park -- it is our pride and joy. With its lake, public art, sports facilities, playgrounds, and picnic gazebos; it is thoroughly enjoyed by our citizens and their families and guests.

Now we will retrace our route to the south side of Highway 111 -- our destination is El Paseo, the street where the elite meet to shop and eat. It runs parallel to the highway and meets it at both ends. The 1958 Sun Lodge Colony was demolished and replaced by the Gardens on El Paseo which opened in the Fall of 1998. West of this shopping center on the corner at Larkspur the Firecliff Lodge was located. The bar and grill was visited by many Palm Desert pioneers when it opened for business in 1947.

A right turn on San Luis Rey will take us to another landmark. The Shadow Mountain Club was the dream of Clifford Henderson, *the place to go* for fun and festivities after it opened in 1948. The complex extends east to Portola Avenue. It was at this location that the Patton Motor Pool was set up during World War II (1943 & 1944.) Further south on Portola at Haystack Road, we come to the Living Desert Reserve on the left. It was established back in 1970 by people who were interested in the environment of the desert.....it's flora and fauna. Even further south we come to the Boyd Deep Canyon Research Center set up by the University of California - Riverside.

Back on Highway 111 and heading east, we see the area's first substantial commercial building, the Desert Magazine Building. It was built and opened by Randall Henderson in July l948. It is boxed in by other buildings now but you can still appreciate the pueblo architecture. In the early days we would have toured the printing plant, admired the Southwest Art Gallery, and browsed through the small shops.

Continuing east, we turn left on Deep Canyon Road until we get to Fred Waring Drive. Here you will see another of Palm Desert's larger churches. Sacred Heart Catholic Church was on the scene in 1956. In fact, its hall was used for community meetings in those early days.

Now we are traveling by stage coach and a station is just ahead. It is the location of the famous Indian well that was dug by the women without the use of implements. Thirty feet below the desert floor the water seeps in at the bottom. Be careful as you follow the slanting path and descending steps. The Cahuilla Indian story is fascinating, but we'll save that for your next visit.

Highway 111 (continued)

Next on the itinerary is Caleb Cook's Ranch. In 1913 he purchased his first piece of property and kept adding more after that. He specialized in growing dates and became well-known for his part in this agricultural industry. You will accept his hospitality with an over-night stay. You might stay in a submarine wrapped in a wet sheet, because it is summer and the temperatures are high.

As we proceed north on Cook Street we go fast-forward to our comfortable, air-conditioned life-style. The latest educational innovations in the Coachella Valley are campuses of California State University-San Bernardino and University of California-Riverside located south of I-10 and north of Frank Sinatra respectively.

Enjoy the trip? Be sure to come in and see the exhibit !!! We will let you know when it's finished.

PALM DESERT GOLF CART PARADE

A History

Compiled by V. Folkers from HSPD Archives

The traditional decorated golf cart parade, which will be Palm Desert's 4lst annual event, has been deferred to January 8, 2006. Like most happenings which involve fickle human nature, there have been ups and downs, gaps in the time span that got us to where we are today. In the early 50s locals and celebrities used to decorate carts and parade around the streets of Palm Desert. They called this activity "Christmas in July."

Also, during the 1950s a tradition called the "Gay Nineties" was started by Clifford Henderson and based at the Shadow Mountain Club. The parade consisted mostly of antique automobiles and locals dressed in period costumes. The people who pioneered the area in those days looked forward to the annual festivities and the fun and food provided afterward at Shadow Mountain. A promotion agent covered advertising in the Los Angeles Times, so the city folks came to join the crowd.

We still look forward to our parade, and our November schedule will seem rather bare without it. Historically speaking, maybe we should look to the past because we have Cliff Henderson, William Powell, Ginger Rogers, Bill Boyd (Hopalong Cassidy), and Esther Williams to thank for starting the whole thing!

NEW MEMBERS

Business
Anar Patel, P.D. National Bank
J. Walker, El Paseo Bank
Sharon Kenty, Photo Colorgraphix
R. F. Sweet & Associates

Contributing
Richard & Ragene Bruner

Supporting
Bob & Marilyn Tardiff

Family
William & Meredith Asher
Kenneth & Debra Stendell

Individual
Sandy Symington

DONATIONS TO OUR COLLECTIONS

Euleen Rickard ..... Plank Road & Desert Training Center materials
Virginia Anderson ..... (3) Plastic Contour Maps, 2l x 34 each, which show the mountains of Southern California
c/o Marilyn Fromme

VETERANS DAY

Friday - November 11 - ll:00 a.m. - $22.00
Historical Society headquarters on El Paseo

The Vietnam War Memorial has been moved from its Painter's Path location to the front yard of the Society's historic fire station. It lists the names of fourteen local men who died in that war. In order to dedicate its new location, the City of Palm Desert is using Veterans Day to celebrate the event. Councilman Richard Kelly will emcee the program. Father Robert Certain will open with an invocation, and Carlos Ortega and Admiral Ben Montoya will be the main speakers. Light refreshments will be served -- everyone is welcome.

Members Who Live in Our Memories

Barbara Jean Callahan preferred to be called "B.J." Throughout her long career as a teacher in Coachella Valley schools and as a community volunteer, she has been the recipient of many awards. We at the Historical Society knew her more personally and appreciated her forthright character and her surpassing talents, especially as we witnessed her working with children. During the 12 years that she and Dan chaired the Mini-Muster Fire Safety Program, she was an integral part of what has made the event successful all those years. When she stood before a group of children to speak, even the rowdiest youngster snapped to attention. They seemed to know instinctively that this lady has something valuable to share. Even adults who were her students during their days at George Washington Elementary School will tell you that she was their favorite teacher. Last December many came to see and talk with her at the school's demolition celebration.

B.J. had an appreciation of life and lived it to the fullest, as is evident in the following:
B.J. will be remembered with each insect and animal that is rescued,
Each child's journey for knowledge,
Each flower that is watered and tended with care,
And each heart that is touched by the kindness of another.
Her memory will live on in the brightness of colorful sunsets
And in the laughter and innocence of every child.

Note: Tim Callahan, Dan and B.J.'s son has suggested that the Society set up a memorial fund in memory of his mother. This would consist of an annual essay contest on local history subjects. Winners would receive a monetary award. Details are not definite, but John Marman has contacted C.O.D. about the college's participation. If you would like to give a gift in memory of B.J, make your check to: Historical Society of Palm Desert, (note at the bottom) B.J. memorial.

****

Hazel O'Neil was a pioneer who took an active part in the history of Palm Desert. She was a member of a group called Concerned Citizens of Palm Desert during the years when the pros and cons of incorporation were being discussed. She also worked with People to People and Unicef. She and her husband, Bill, donated a pump organ to the Society which is one of our most valuable Historical pieces. Alvasina Nolan was employed by the Nixon family, and they gave the organ to her when she left. Mrs. Nolan established the first homestead in Palm Desert along the west edge of Silver Spur Ranch. When she became ill and needed a caretaker, Hazel stepped in, and consequently became the owner of the organ. She and Bill generously donated it to the Society.

****

Ann Bonesteel was born and raised in New York, which accounted for her eastern accent. After her insurance salesman husband, Abe, retired they moved to Palm Springs. When she became a widow, Ann took an apartment here in Palm Desert. We met through a mutual friend and P.D. pioneer, Celia Dunn. She was a lovely redhead with an engaging personality. When Abe was alive he would play the piano and she would sing. She proved to be very kind-hearted and a loyal friend to many here in Palm Desert.

MINI-MUSTER FIRE SAFETY PROGRAM

John and Madonna Marman are our able leaders in carrying out the duties of this exciting program in conjunction with the Riverside County Fire Department and Desert Sands Unified School District. They need all the help we can give them, so please volunteer by calling the office at 346-6588 and putting your name on the list. Following is a schedule for this program:

	Tuesday - Oct. 4	Lincoln School
	Thursday - Oct. 6	Ford School
	Tuesday - Oct. 11	Carter School
	Friday - Oct. 14	Washington School
Time:	8:30 a.m.	Volunteers arrive at school
	9:15 a.m. - 12:00 noon	Field Activities
	12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
	1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Assembly Program & Awards

ANNUAL YARD SALE
Saturday and Sunday - October 29 and 30
7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day

Don Graybill, Hal Rover, Gary Olesen and Dick Folkers have been busy all summer picking up donations for this fund-raising event -- so we have a good start; but we need your saleable discards. Remember, we do not take shoes, clothing, mattresses or bed pillows. A boutique booth will be set up to display antiques, jewelry, collectibles, and fine home décor items. You may drop off your donations in the back yard. Receipts for your income tax will be available during office hours -- 10 am till 3 pm on Mon./Wed./Fri. Want a pick up at your home? Call the office at 346-6588 and leave a message.....your call will be returned as soon as possible so an appointment can be arranged.

We depend on this sale to raise funds so that we can continue our out-reach programs to the children of our community. One way you can participate is to talk to your friends, relatives, and co-workers.....both as donors and as potential buyers. Mention to people holding residential yard sales that we will pick up their left-overs and give them a receipt. The Society has purchased additional shade covers to keep us more comfortable if that weekend happens to be sunny. If you would like to help out before, during or after the sale - please call and volunteer.

DOCENT / VOLUNTEER NEWS
Jean Ernst - Committee Chair

Everyone is encouraged to attend docent meetings to learn more about Palm Desert, and about the Historical Society's facility, archives, and displays. Also it's a good way to get acquainted. An organizational and informational meeting for the new season was held on Sept. l4. Jan Holmlund provided information on the local branch of the Bradshaw Trail.

The next meeting will be a visit to the home/garage of Richard and Helen Nederhauser, who have a collection of movie memorabilia. It is scheduled for Wednesday, November 16, at 1:00 p.m. Please call Jean Ernst at 346-0041 or the Society office at 346-6588 for directions or if you need a ride.

We need to add to our list of docents and substitutes, especially for the noon to 3:00 p.m. time slot. Can we count on you? You need not come every week; how about one three-hour period per month? A large number of docents will be needed for the Veteran's Day celebration on Friday, Nov. 11, at 11:00 am., which will be held at our historic fire house this year. This will be a good opportunity for new docents to get their feet wet by tagging along with one of our more experienced guides. Please call Jean Ernst or Anne Tuttle in the office and put your name on the list.

EXHIBITS

Archie Sharp, a professional, is leading in the design and execution of a l7-foot long display of the history of "Highway 111." There have been some work sessions during the summer, and we expect to have the exhibit ready for the public in October. Other members working on the exhibit are Don Graybill, Jan Holmlund and Dick Folkers. You will want to see this exciting project which depicts historic aspects of the Bradshaw Trail as well as a time line and significant development along the main artery in the City of Palm Desert. Other exhibits are presently in the planning stages, one has to do with Cahuilla Indian basketry.

MEMBERSHIP

A new campaign will be held during October, November, and December. We will accept names of potential members which you give us anonymously. Someone will then contact them to determine whether they would be interested in becoming members of the Society. Call in the names you have in mind or give a list to Anne Tuttle.

The following poem was found in a book about Desert artists. It was compiled by "The Western Woman" and printed by Randall Henderson in the l950s. It was written by Bertha Adams Backus.

Build for yourself a strong-box,
Fashion each part with care;
When it's strong as your hand can make it,
Put all your troubles there;
Hide there all thought of your failures,
And each bitter cup that you quaff;
Lock all your heartaches within it,
Then sit on the lid and laugh !

FALL LUNCHEON

Wednesday, October 19, 11:00 a.m.
Shadow Mountain Club

Our featured speaker will be John Wohlmuth of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments. You won't want to miss this program; it will bring you up to date on what's happening in the valley. We will have a new public address system so everyone will be able to hear the speakers. Plan to invite a guest who would like to sign up for membership in the Society.

Landscaping: The front yard of the historic fire house is being rejuvenated thanks to the City of Palm Desert.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

Sept. 24.....Visitor Center grand opening - 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Oct. 4, 6, 11, l4.....Mini-Muster program, 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Oct. 19.....Fall Luncheon, Shadow Mt. Club, 11:00 a.m.
Oct. 29-30.....Yard Sale at Society, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. each day
Nov. 11.....Veteran's Day at Society, 11:00 a.m.
Oct./Nov./Dec.....Membership campaign (we are counting on you)
Jan. 8, 2006.....Golf Cart Parade, 1:00 p.m.

From the editor: All articles for the Winter issue of the Hourglass should be submitted to Ginny Folkers by November 15.

Historical Society of Palm Desert
P. O. Box 77
Palm Desert, CA 92261